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ABSTRACT

It is vitally important for all U.S. citizens to know that they can make a difference, that they can affect the futures of their towns, cities, and nation. The grass roots tradition is alive and flourishing in communities all over the country. This document proposes programs in which members of different generations work together as partners on common projects. A chapter called "Young and Old Together" discusses the need for and benefits of intergenerational programming as well as what is necessary to make it work, and possible obstacles to be overcome. A "Getting Started" chapter deals with the specifics of organizing an intergenerational group and a "Working with Issues" section illustrates how to plan and execute a variety of activities, from a simple fact-finding session at the library to organizing a conference or symposium. Two final sections deal respectively with how to generate good publicity using the various media types, and with the basics of raising money for projects undertaken. A list of eight organizations that sponsor or encourage intergenerational programs is included. (JB)

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# BUILDING BRIDGES TO CITIZENSHIP

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# BUILDING BRIDGES TO CITIZENSHIP

*HOW TO CREATE SUCCESSFUL INTERGENERATIONAL CITIZENSHIP PROGRAMS*

***Building Bridges to Citizenship:***
***How to Create Successful Intergenerational Programs***
*was funded by a grant from the Mott Foundation and was written by Lois Berkowitz and Beryl Lieff Benderly. The interpretations and conclusions contained in this publication represent the views of the Close Up Foundation and not necessarily those of the Mott Foundation, its trustees, or officers.*

The Close Up Foundation is a nonprofit, nonpartisan educational organization that has been serving citizens since 1971. It seeks to stimulate responsible participation in the democratic process through educational programs in government and citizenship. It has no affiliation with any branch of government, political party, or interest group. The Close Up curriculum presents many sides of the issues, leaving political judgments to the individual.

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# 1 / WELCOME TO INTERGENERATIONAL CITIZENSHIP

Grass roots democracy is one of the great American traditions. Since the dawn of independence in this country, through industrialization, wars, economic depressions, and waves of immigration, that tradition has remained alive. But in today's impersonal and technological society, where machines sometimes seem more important than human beings, many people feel powerless; they feel that they have no role to play in their country's government.

It is vitally important for all Americans to know that they can make a difference—that they can affect the futures of their towns, cities, and nation. The grass roots tradition is not lost; it is alive and flourishing in communities all over the country. You have chosen to become a part of this important tradition. Perhaps you have participated in a Close Up Week in Washington as part of a high school, older Americans, or intergenerational group. Perhaps your consciousness has been raised by other people or through special circumstances. In any case, you have decided that you want to have a say about the future of America. This book is designed to help you do that.

*Building Bridges to Citizenship* will also show you how to bridge the generation gap to accomplish your goals. What we are proposing is somewhat different from most existing intergenerational programs. Most programs are structured with the purpose of one generation helping another (i.e., foster grandparents "adopting" young children, high schoolers running errands for senior citizens, etc.). We propose programs in which members of different generations work together as partners on common projects. Neither age-group is defined as needing the help of the other; both age-groups are necessary to the success of the enterprise.

The Close Up Foundation, which has published *Building Bridges to Citizenship* through a special grant from the Mott Foundation, hopes that the book will find a wide readership among concerned citizens both within and outside the Close Up network.

The book is meant to be used by people of all ages who want to expand their knowledge of the political process and sharpen their skills in new areas. Program planning involves organizational skills, writing skills, human relations skills, fund-raising skills and more. Development of such skills can lead young people to set their career sights higher or lead to second careers for older Americans.

## *About the Close Up Foundation*

The Close Up Foundation is dedicated to the principle that informed, active citizens are essential to a responsive government and a supportive community. Close Up is committed to helping citizens of all ages gain a practical understanding of how public policy affects their lives and how individual and collective efforts affect public policy.

Since 1971, thousands of high school students and teachers have participated in Close Up's Week-in-Washington

Program, an intensive, behind-the-scenes look at the nation's government. In 1984, Close Up, in conjunction with the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), instituted a similar civic learning experience for senior citizens—the Program for Older Americans. Always in the vanguard, Close Up presented its first intergenerational Washington program in late 1987, which was deemed a great success by all participants.

In 1985, Close Up initiated its innovative Citizen Bee, a nationwide competition that encourages high school students to acquire and apply the concepts on which our political heritage is based.

Close Up also offers programs for students with special needs, for students from other countries, and for youth who have been involved in the juvenile justice system.

The Close Up network extends to all fifty states, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the U.S. Territories, and more than twenty foreign countries. Many programs of the type in which you might be involved are held each year at the local, state, and regional levels. Often, participants are linked by the C-SPAN cable network. Also, Close Up nationally televises programs on current issues and the political process. Close Up/C-SPAN telecasts are currently transmitted to more than thirty million subscriber households in all fifty states.

In addition, Close Up publishes several books on government, the political process, and major current issues, which are used by educators nationwide. Close Up also develops videotapes and "how-to" booklets that are similar to this book in offering guidance with planning of civic awareness activities.

We hope that *Building Bridges to Citizenship* will help you understand the philosophy behind "intergenerating" (a newly minted word) and motivate you to spearhead the formation of an intergenerational group of concerned and active citizens. The book will show you how to get your group going and how to plan, execute, and publicize a variety of activities. You may copy the ideas and formats presented here or create your own. Some useful resources are included to provide even more help.

A few blank pages have been included at the back of the book so you can make notes as you go along. Please share your comments on what works and what does not. Your suggestions will be incorporated into the next edition. Please address all comments to:

■ ***Building Bridges to Citizenship***
*Publications Department*
*Close Up Foundation*
*1235 Jefferson Davis Highway*
*Arlington, Virginia 22202*

# 2 / YOUNG AND OLD TOGETHER

Intergenerational programming is a new name for something that Americans once did naturally—getting together people of many ages to work for the common good, tapping both the energy of youth and the wisdom of age to achieve common purposes. Years ago, this pooling of talents simply arose in the normal course of things—in our families, neighborhoods, and churches. But today getting generations together happens much less often. Major demographic and social trends over the last forty years have changed the way we live. Now, most of us have fewer chances to get to know people of other generations and less opportunity to share the richness of working together. Today, if we want the generations to work or play together, we often must consciously create the occasion.

Until World War II, many Americans lived in households that included people of several different generations. Unmarried adults rarely lived alone, and married couples often moved in with relatives. Those who did not live in multi-generational households were surrounded by neighbors who did. Life revolved around the home, and few institutions catered to only a single age group.

But during World War II, conditions began to change. Millions of Americans left their homes, families, and roots to work in government or war industries or to enter military service. And after the war, increased educational opportunities and job mobility encouraged young people to settle away from their hometowns.

After World War II, GIs by the millions returned home, married, and began families. Even many who settled where they had grown up left their old extended-family households. With their wives and their rapidly growing families of little "baby boomers," they moved from their former neighborhoods and family farms into new suburbs built with cheap government credit and filled with other people of their own age and stage of family life. Their children often grew up in neighborhoods almost devoid of older people.

In the post-war economic boom, millions of Americans moved to new parts of town or new parts of the country seeking advancement. For the four decades since, this trend has continued and even accelerated. The extended family household, once common in every town and on every block, became rarer by the year.

Meanwhile, older people were not sitting still either. With advances in medical technology, their numbers have steadily grown. Today, one American in nine has reached age sixty-five. Unprecedented numbers of men and women

have reached retirement age; enough to create whole communities of their own. Millions of retired Americans have taken advantage of their new freedom to follow the sun for all or part of the year. Retirement communities for active, healthy adults, unknown a generation ago, have sprung up in the "Sun Belt" and many other parts of the country. Many retired persons now live far from their old homes and their children and grandchildren.

Methods of caring for the disabled elderly have also changed. In years past, Americans often kept their aging and ill relatives at home. But more and more women have entered the workforce, extended families have scattered, more people are living longer, and medical technology is becoming more complex. Today's smaller, two-earner families face a difficult challenge providing adequate care for their homebound and chronically ill elderly at home. Therefore, more people live in long-term care facilities than did a generation ago.

These days, children are also spending more time with their own age-group. As the number of working mothers rises, so does the number of children in day-care facilities, where preschoolers have little chance to meet people of other generations.

The net result of these trends is that Americans now live in a society increasingly segregated by age. Like all social segregation, this separation has some socially harmful side effects. It is in countering these harmful side effects that intergenerational programming can be so effective.

## *What Are the Benefits?*

When people of one generation know little about people of another generation, they can often misunderstand each other's folkways. They may have difficulty sympathizing with each other's problems and points of view. They can form negative stereotypes and may even come to resent and fear one another.

Persons of different age-groups may also miss learning from one another and enriching each other's lives. Elders and youngsters have valuable things to teach one another, both about the traditions and legacy of the past and about ways of understanding and adapting to today's society. Each age-group has knowledge, skills, and outlooks that can help the other.

For example, young people need to learn that they will be old one day. They need to understand aging as a normal part of the life cycle. They must understand that their lives will change and that others have overcome the difficulties they now face. Only an older person can teach these lessons.

Older people, on the other hand, need to keep abreast of a world that is changing much more rapidly than the world did when they were young. As anthropologist Margaret Mead pointed out, "In a fast-changing society like ours, the young are the pathfinders and pioneers. They are the experts on today and tomorrow, the people who feel most at home in the new."

Intergenerational programs can provide the bridge over which elders and youngsters can exchange knowledge and insights. And there are other benefits.

- In working with each other, both young and old can develop a greater sense of usefulness and purpose. Elders will put their experience and wisdom to use. Youngsters will contribute their boundless enthusiasm and experience the satisfaction of service.

- Older and younger persons can share significant friendships that open their lives to different outlooks and social circles.

- Older persons, who may be suffering the loss of spouse, siblings, old friends, or physical capacities greatly benefit from new relationships.

- By combining their disparate yet complementary abilities, young and old can invigorate volunteer and service organizations.

- By forging ties among generations, people can further alliances among varied groups in the community.

- The passing on of traditions from one generation to the next will strengthen the feeling of community and cut down on isolation and insularity. Once people know one another personally, they are far less likely to see themselves as members of opposing groups with conflicting interests.

All these benefits can accrue to your group's members and eventually to your community if enough people are willing to bridge the gap between generations. Regardless of your age, you can be one of the people to take the first step.

Across the nation, thousands of Americans already participate in intergenerational programs in which one generation helps or provides services to another generation. For example, older adults may tutor school children, teach craft skills, and counsel adolescents. Young people may visit nursing homes and senior centers or provide chore service to housebound elderly persons. Such programs meet important needs and foster lasting relationships.

However, *Building Bridges to Citizenship* encourages a different kind of intergenerational cooperation, one that is not yet widespread in the United States. A collaboration in which different generations work as partners can afford an excellent opportunity for strong and lasting relationships among persons who otherwise would not have had a chance to become friends.

The Close Up Foundation is one of the few organizations with practical experience in this type of programming. One pioneering effort is the highly successful Close Up program of Washington study visits. For instance, one Close Up program involved high school students and older adults from three Florida cities in a study of the national debt. Activities included a keynote speech, debates, a teleconference with Senator Lawton Chiles, and a game allowing participants to learn about budget politics by trying to set priorities.

Increasing numbers of organizations are undertaking projects in which the generations work as partners. In Tulsa, Oklahoma, high school students and older persons worked together on projects during a weeklong government internship. Temple University, in Philadelphia, sponsored weeklong residential learning retreats for persons between the ages of fourteen and ninety-three. Temple also sponsors an intergenerational theater group that presents shows dealing with issues of youth and age. In a Montgom-

ery County, Maryland, program, older people and high schoolers met weekly for seven weeks to explore the role and meaning of the U.S. Constitution in their lives.

Clearly, the possibilities for intergenerational programming are as broad as the interests of the participants and the issues facing our nation.

## *Making It Work*

Research has shown that successful intergenerational activities have met certain criteria, which help programs get off to a good start and keep them going over the long haul. Consider the following questions as you prepare to develop your program:

- *Does the program meet a real need?* A successful intergenerational program would attract people even without the "intergenerational" title. It promises a real opportunity for interesting, useful activities, not artificial, made-up pastimes.

- *Do all participants take an active part and gain real benefits?* Everyone should feel necessary, useful, and valued. There should be tasks that use the abilities of each generation as well as recognize the contributions of everyone. All participants should feel they have a chance to influence what happens. No one should feel bossed around, condescended to, or trivialized.

- *Will people of different generations feel comfortable in the program?* The structure and procedures of the program should respect the values and norms of all age-groups. All age-groups must understand that others have different sensibilities. Even small things, such as the way people are addressed or the language used, may "turn off" one group or the other.

- *Does the program feel comfortable to people who do not know one another?* To integrate such disparate groups, there must be ways of welcoming strangers and showing them they are valued.

- *Does the project have a real base of support in both generations?* The project will have a better chance of succeeding if it arises from groups, interests, or habits to which people are already committed. You may find it helpful to gain the cooperation of existing organizations already serving your target generations.

- *Can the project continue over time?* The project should have sufficient intrinsic interest to attract people other than the original participants. It has a good chance of becoming a long-lasting and growing network if it develops methods of integrating newcomers.

## Overcoming Obstacles

Even though your program may meet all the suggested criteria, you still may have to pay special attention to potential obstacles to success.

- *Spreading the word.* Convincing people of different generations to participate may take a lot of effort. You must analyze the needs and interests of your target groups and explain your program in terms that make sense. You may need a different "sales pitch" for each generation.

- *Finding the time.* Finding a convenient meeting time for everyone is not always easy. For example, students are busy during school hours and often have homework, school activities, or jobs after school. Older people, who are often free during the day, may not want to go out in the evening.

- *Getting together.* Even though people may wish to participate and have agreed on a time, getting to the meetings may be a problem. Students and older people often depend on public transportation.

## Setting the Stage

Once you have dealt with any obstacles, you are ready to begin your program. Your initial challenge is to break down the attitude of "we" and "they" and foster a feeling of "us." Here are some ways to do this.

- *Think small.* Starting out on a modest scale has several advantages. First, it keeps goals achievable so that participants experience success early on. Second, it allows for changes without big investments of time or money. And third, it allows people to get to know one another.

- *Keep it personal.* Encourage participants to deal with each other as individuals and not as representatives of an age-group. Structure tasks so that persons of various generations can take part. Keep task groups small to encourage one-to-one interactions.

- *Look for allies.* Use the experience and knowledge of existing groups that work with older people or young people. They already know the resources of your community, the people who can help you, and the approaches that work for them. Consulting them early can keep you from wasting time reinventing the wheel.

- *Involve everyone in planning.* The best way to meet the needs of people and appeal to their interests is to ask them what their needs and interests are. Members of all age-groups should be involved in planning.

Launching a successful intergenerational group is trickier and takes more planning than starting a group involving only one generation. But the benefits your members and your community will gain will repay the effort amply.

# 3 / GETTING STARTED

Now that you are more aware of the pleasures and problems of intergenerating, let's look at the specifics of organizing an intergenerational group in your community.

## Getting Involved

You can benefit from becoming involved with the democratic process as an individual. You can research issues, write letters, participate in discussions, run for public office, and more. But we think you may find more satisfaction in getting involved as part of an intergenerational group.

Civic awareness or civic action are two ways of getting involved, and the two are not mutually exclusive. You or your group may simply want to become more aware and knowledgeable about certain issues, or you may want to make others aware. Awareness often leads to action. Once you are informed about an issue, you may want to actively try to change it.

Start small, as suggested in Chapter 2. Find a few friends or acquaintances in your own age-group who are interested in active citizenship and the possibilities of intergenerational relationships. Then look around for a person in another age group who has the same interests. You might find this person within your own family or among the friends of someone in your family. You may already have developed a friendship with a person of a different age-group through school, church, hobby, or interest groups. Ask that person to find a few friends, and arrange a meeting time that is most convenient. The smaller the group, the better. (Less than ten is probably best—people get to know each other better and faster in small groups.)

## Breaking the Ice

Once you have formed the nucleus of your organization, how can you make it jell successfully? The first few meetings are absolutely crucial to the success of intergenerational projects. When people meet strangers, first impressions are lasting impressions. Early sessions should make people feel comfortable in what is probably an unfamiliar situation. Try to overcome differences in style and manners that separate the generations. Attempt to break the ice. Here are some practical suggestions that can help.

- *Make sure the meeting place is easily accessible to everyone and that everyone will be able to see and hear clearly.* It may be necessary to make special arrangements for people with special problems. Be sure that everyone knows such accommodations can be made.

- *Find a meeting place that is comfortable and inviting.* Arrange furniture in a way that does not suggest hierarchy or separation. For example, seating people in a circle is much more democratic or egalitarian than dividing them into an audience and speaker arrangement.

- *Let people know who is there.* It is important that people be able to call one another by name. Everyone should introduce himself or herself to the group, briefly describing experiences and interests. Name tags help at first.

- *Address people by the names they prefer.* For example, an elderly women may find it offensive to be addressed as "Mary" by a young person she has just met. Calling her "Mrs. Smith" will put her at ease and remind the young people, who may be accustomed to using first names immediately, that social customs differ from group to group.

- *Plan some ice-breaking activities at the beginning.* For instance, constructing a group timeline serves two purposes. First, it draws everyone into the discussion, and second, it allows people to compare their experiences and ideas. A leader might show the group a chart of important world events arranged chronologically on a timeline. Each participant could then discuss where he or she was when the events occurred.

To give group members a basis for common conversation, arrange a meeting with a theme, such as "South of the Border" or "Chocoholic's Dream." Then ask everybody to bring food that fits the theme. Or suggest that they bring their least flattering photographs or favorite keepsakes. You might ask people to bring their favorite records or tapes and let each generation explain its music and dances to the other.

No matter what kind of icebreaker you use, the idea should be to create lively conversation and a commonality of interests. If your group has been formed around a special civic issue or action, icebreakers may not be necessary because the people there will already have some common ground.

## *Establishing an Agenda*

Once your group feels fairly comfortable (don't expect miracles—it takes time and shared experiences for people to really warm to each other), you can discuss an agenda. What are their interests? Do they want to be a formal club or just a loose-knit group? Do they want to affiliate with other organizations? What do they want to accomplish? Are they more interested in civic awareness or civic action? On what issues should they focus? Again, if your group has gathered around a specific issue or activity, choosing a focus will not be necessary; the agenda will be obvious. Instead, the members will have to decide how to accomplish the agenda. Consider the following items when making decisions about the agenda:

- *Examine issues.* Find out what the group's interests are. Are they global in scope? (world hunger, arms control, international trade and tariffs, pollution of the atmosphere) national? (homelessness, drugs, the budget deficit) statewide or regional? (education, river cleanup, tax codes, care of children and the aging) or local? (housing, environmental protection, crime, political corruption). Many issues are both local and national in scope. Your group may decide to examine an issue at the national level but act on it at the local level, or vice versa.

  If members are interested in several issues, perhaps some may focus on one issue and some on another. Try to make sure that issues are not divided along age lines—if all the senior citizens choose to study Medicare and all the young people choose to mount an antidrug campaign, your intergenerational organization will likely disintegrate.

- *Outline group size and structure.* Does your group prefer to be a loosely knit entity that organizes around a one-time issue or event? Or does it prefer to have a formal structure with a name, constitution, dues, and

specific meeting times? Does it want to stay small for better social interaction, or does it need to grow in order to accomplish its goals? Would it be advantageous to affiliate with others for more effective interaction or to gain expertise and support?

- *Discuss goals and methodology.* Do the members want to concentrate on civic awareness by educating themselves and others in the community about their group's issues, or do they want to educate themselves and then also take an active stand on the issues?

As mentioned before, one way to start an intergenerational group is to gather together people of all ages who are concerned about a particular issue. Of course, this type of group must educate itself about its issue of concern, but then focus on civic action.

- *Decide on activities.* If your group wants to create civic awareness, the following activities will accomplish its purpose:

  1. Present a forum or panel discussion that clarifies the views of people on both sides of an issue.

  2. Moderate a debate between people on both sides of an issue.

  3. Divide into intergenerational study groups to research various aspects of an issue and then gather together for an informal workshop.

  4. Plan a visit to a local or regional site that is related to your issue, such as a toxic-waste dump or a shelter for the homeless.

  5. Attend relevant meetings and hearings and discuss an issue with local or state representatives.

When your organization decides to take action, the following activities can be planned:

1. Write letters to local, state, or national representatives or coordinate a local letter-writing campaign.

2. Conduct practice hearings and then testify at hearings and court proceedings.

3. Actively lobby local, state, or national representatives through visits and pressure groups.

4. Conduct fund-raising drives to help make changes.

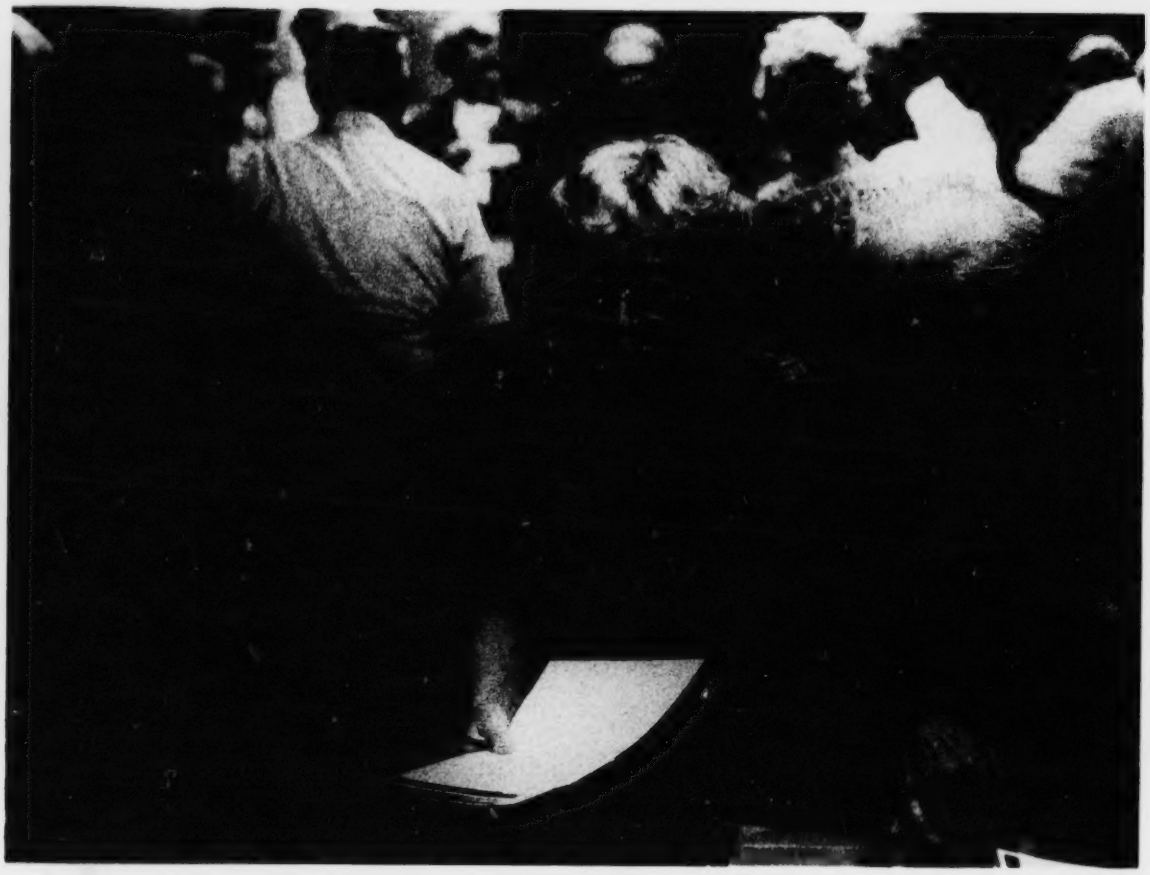
5. Plan and hold rallies and demonstrations.

6. Work on political campaigns.

7. Perform community-service jobs.

There is plenty of room for you to make your own choices. While most may prefer civic awareness activities, some members may decide to become more active as individuals or subgroups.

- *Leave time for fun.* No matter what your group decides to do, don't forget to allow time for socializing. Almost any activity can be coupled with a party or a shared meal. Working together inspires mutual trust and respect, but socializing helps interpersonal relationships grow, and that, after all, is the ultimate goal of including people of all ages.



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Let's assume that your group has decided to focus on civic awareness, concentrating its efforts on learning about and making others aware of a particular issue. In this situation members might want to become a part of the Close Up network or affiliate with other organizations. Discuss possible affiliation and the advantages and disadvantages. The advantages of affiliating your group with another are many. An already existing group can offer you the following:

- more members or a mailing list of possible members
- meeting sites
- existing office facilities with possible use of phones and office machines
- expertise on certain issues
- necessary supplies and materials
- speakers and programs
- possible funds for programs and materials

## Affiliating with Close Up

In joining the Close Up network, your group will enjoy many of the advantages mentioned above. To find out what the possibilities are, all you have to do is call or write the Close Up Foundation and contact the community coordinator for your geographical area. Close Up can be reached at

- *Close Up Foundation*
  *1235 Jefferson Davis Highway*
  *Arlington, Virginia 22202*
  *800-336-5479 or 703-892-5400*

Close Up programs have been established in dozens of localities. A group of dedicated community coordinators travel extensively to offer advice and support.

Your community coordinator will tell you if Close Up clubs or programs are operating in your area and how to contact them. If your intergenerational organization would like to call itself a Close Up Club and formalize itself as such, the coordinator will help you do so. If you have a particular project or idea in mind, the coordinator may even visit and discuss plans with you, showing you how Close Up can help.

You may find that there is a Close Up Club at one or more of your local high schools with enthusiastic faculty advisors, or you may become an advisor yourself. Your group may want to join such a club or at least affiliate with it for certain activities.

At the other end of the spectrum, you may discover that there is a Program for Older Americans in your area, with enthusiastic senior citizens who have visited Washington. You may want to affiliate with them on a temporary or permanent basis. Affiliation with such a program also carries an extra benefit, support from the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), which sponsors the Program for Older Americans in conjunction with the Close Up Foundation.

Perhaps you live in an area where a Citizen Bee has been held and want to work on it; or you may find that local or regional programs with teleconference capacity have been held in your area. (See Chapter 1 for more details about Close Up activities.)

Your group may want to originate or participate in a local or regional program and apply to Close Up for funding, or you may need some hints about how to get local businesses and government interested in your issues. You might want to obtain some of Close Up's publications and videotapes on

current events, which deal with a host of issues and present unbiased information in lively formats.

If your organization does not wish to affiliate officially with Close Up, you as an individual, or a few members of your group can still join or work with a Close Up Club or project in your area. No matter which route you decide to take, your community coordinator will be happy to help you.

### *Affiliating with Other Groups*

As long as your focus is on civic awareness, there are many other organizations with which you can affiliate. These organizations, like the Close Up Foundation, are not in the business of "taking sides" on issues; rather, they feel it is important to inform the local citizenry about every aspect of an issue and then encourage citizens to take action if they choose to.

For example, the League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan organization that is vitally interested in local, regional, and national issues. Since League membership includes women (and some men) of all ages, this kind of affiliation will not upset your group's intergenerational balance.

You might also think about affiliating with civic clubs such as the Kiwanis Club, Lions Club, or Rotary Club. These organizations have strong ties with local businesses and government and a commitment to civic improvement. They can help you raise funds, provide workers and working space, and help broaden your membership base.

If you are looking for younger members to balance your group, try approaching the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, 4-H Clubs, YMCA, and YWCA in your area. Many teenagers in these organizations are already interested or involved in community affairs and are hardworking, responsible leaders. For older members, try senior citizens' groups that already exist at churches, senior centers, and recreation centers.

Is there a military base in your area? Contact some of the on-base groups. Even though these men and women are not regular members of your community, they have a strong interest in national political awareness and often take a great deal of interest in local affairs.

Other possible affiliations might include affinity groups such as hobby clubs, or job-related groups such as retired teachers or local bar associations. Your group may affiliate with some of these organizations on an issue-by-issue basis. For example, if your group chooses to present a debate on local water pollution and cleanup, you might elicit interest from clubs of boat owners, sport fishermen, or professional engineers.

### *Not Affiliating*

Your group does not necessarily have to affiliate with anyone else. There is nothing wrong with "doing your own thing," even if independence means doing projects on a smaller scale or with less formality. Your group may feel that it will get swallowed up by a larger or more professional affiliate, or that the benefits of intergenerational socializing will be lost by affiliating. Don't spend too much time worrying about affiliating or not affiliating. Instead, do what makes your members feel most comfortable.

## *Getting Started on Civic Action*

There are many routes to civic action. After you as an individual have become politically aware, you then may decide to act on a particular issue. Likewise, your group may start with civic awareness and then all or some of your members may become action-oriented. A group often mobilizes around a special issue.

Forming a group around an issue poses the least problem for intergenerational relationships. If everyone there feels strongly about a particular issue, such as rezoning a residential area in order to build a shelter for the homeless or forcing a local factory owner to install antipollution devices, they start on common ground and age difference is not much of a problem. When people fight for a cause in which they all strongly believe, group unity naturally results.

If all or part of your group has moved from civic awareness to civic action, its members will have to examine goals, issues, strategy, structure, and affiliation again (see section on "Getting Started as a Group"), because these items may now have changed. If your members originally mobilized as an action group, they may have to go through an awareness phase where they focus on education. A group cannot take effective action on an issue unless all its members know as much as possible about that issue.

### *Affiliating with Other Action-Oriented Groups*

As with civic awareness, your group may benefit from affiliating with other action-oriented groups. In most cases, the Close Up network is not a viable affiliation for action groups because the Close Up name can only be associated with nonpartisan activities. However, affiliating with Close Up may vary on a case by case basis. If your group has become a Close Up Club and later the club, or some part of it, wants to take civic action, the action group can then call itself Citizens for Homeless Shelters, Citizens for a Cleaner Community, or any title that fits. The Close Up Club can support the action group if it chooses, by sponsoring related, but unbiased, community awareness activities. Whether your group started in the action arena or has moved there, you will want to consult with a Close Up community coordinator, so that you can find out exactly what connection, if any, you can have with Close Up.

If your organization likes the idea of affiliating with other similar organizations, a list of possible local, state, and national affiliations will likely emerge from researching your issue. For example, if your issue concerns the environment, logical affiliations might be the National Wildlife Federation, associations of outdoor outfitters, or local hiking or hunting clubs. If your issue is combating drunk driving, you might contact MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Driving), Alcoholics Anonymous, local driving schools, or racing clubs. Such existing organizations will put you in touch with other interested people in your locality and can supply you with additional information, speakers, and other kinds of help.

### *Not Affiliating*

As mentioned earlier, affiliation is not necessary. Your issue or cause may be entirely local or one that does not lend itself to outside affiliation, or you may be sponsoring a one-time rally or event that does not need ongoing support. Your members will be the best judges of affiliation preferences.

# 4 / WORKING WITH ISSUES

Once you have your intergenerational group together and everyone is clear about its issues and objectives, you are ready to undertake specific steps toward reaching your goals, be they increasing the civic awareness of your own members, increasing the public's awareness, or affecting public policy. This chapter will show you how to plan and execute a variety of activities, from a relatively simple fact-finding session at the library to organizing a large event like a conference or symposium.

Before getting to specifics, however, consider some basic realities about working in groups.

## Dividing the Work

People work efficiently when everyone isn't trying to do everything. When assigning tasks, you will probably want to break up into committees, each with a particular respon-

sibility. Among the committees you might find useful could be a research committee that digs into documents concerning your issue, a program committee that schedules speakers and agendas, a legislative committee that monitors the progress of legislation related to your issue, a public relations committee that publicizes your group, and a transportation committee that coordinates trips.

In an intergenerational group, it is vital to assign significant responsibilities to people of every age. You will probably want to have both younger and older people active in each area. Not only does involving people of all ages maintain equality, it also encourages strong relationships among those who work closely together.

You will find that some people are more responsible than others (and this has nothing to do with age!) and that some work harder than others. It may seem that a small number of people do most of the work. Don't let this bother you. Such is the nature of groups—especially volunteer groups, from which members can withdraw whenever they wish. Unlike paid employees, volunteers can leave without economic penalty. But most people will work hard if they see a way to influence or lead the group.

Subdivide the work until it falls into logical and manageable sections. The more clearly the lines of responsibility are drawn, the likelier it is that each participant will do his or her job. Until you have a sense of your group's capacities and limitations, keep your projects small. If the beginning projects are too ambitious, you may experience a disappointing flop that will sap group morale. Projects must be realistic and manageable given time limitations.

## *Exploring an Issue*

Now you can proceed to the "nuts and bolts" of working with an issue—such as defense policy, the environment, drugs, health care, or whatever interests you—on the local, national, or international levels. Whether your group is active in civic awareness or civic action, there are a number of activities you can undertake. Each activity will benefit from the talents and energies of persons of all ages, and all involve assignments that lend themselves well to intergenerational teams.

## *Research*

Solid research should always be the first step in working with any issue. Little of value can be accomplished unless the members have a grasp of both the broad, important aspects of the issue and accurate, detailed information about it as well. An efficient way of approaching research is to ask individual members of the research committee to report to the whole group on specific aspects of the subject.

For example, suppose you are working on defense policy. You might ask one person to compile descriptions of the major weapons systems, their characteristics, and prevalence. Someone else could summarize the history of arms control agreements. A third member could find out about the various national and international agencies involved in arms control. And a fourth could report on recent Soviet-American agreements on arms reduction. These reports could be staggered so they are presented in logical sequence, allowing each person to build on the information that has been presented before. By presenting the research as a series of reports, the entire group gains an overview without unduly burdening any individual.

The members doing research will need some simple equipment. If they intend to keep notes on sheets of paper, they will need folders or notebooks to organize their notes. If they are using index cards, they will need a file box and subject separators. Many experienced researchers find file cards an efficient and flexible method of storing lots of notes. Researchers who have access to a home computer as well as a lap-top model will have the great convenience of entering data at the library and simply "downloading" it into the main computer at home. But computers are far from necessary to effective and efficient research; writers and scholars have worked without them for centuries. However, one new machine that has become indispensable in research is the copier. Copiers allow researchers to take whole documents home. Bring lots of change!

For basic orientation on many important issues, Close Up's *Current Issues* is a good place to start. You will also benefit from a library that has both a good reference and periodicals section. A good reference librarian can help you tap into systems that are set up as interlibrary loan and regional borrowing networks. For detailed studies, you might consider checking the reference section of a college or university library.

A well-stocked reference section has a large number of reference volumes and indexes that give access to a wealth of factual information. Publications like the *New York Times Index* and *Facts on File* serve as chronicles of current events. The *Encyclopedia of Associations* lists thousands of groups interested in a myriad of subjects. Writing letters to those associations concerned with your issue can produce very valuable material. Most larger libraries will also have a host of directories and encyclopedias in many other fields. In addition, government documents form a vast treasure trove of information, although they require the guidance of a knowledgeable librarian. In starting to work at an unfamiliar library, your best strategy is to lay out the project before a reference librarian, who is an expert in using the library's collection.

Government agencies and special libraries are also significant sources of specialized information. Most government agencies have information or public affairs offices staffed by people who specialize in answering questions. Some government agencies and private organizations have special libraries that are open to the public. Call before visiting these libraries to find out their hours, availability to the public, and any special requirements.

Research can benefit from an intergenerational approach. The older person's wider knowledge of public affairs can be useful in guiding the search, whereas a younger person may cope more easily with some of the physical challenges of library work.

## *Letter Writing*

When members of the group have formulated questions or opinions, they may wish to write letters concerning the issue to public officials or newspapers.

In order to get the most sympathetic attention, it is important to use the name of the proper person and their correct title and address. Reference sections of libraries often have directories of local and national government agencies, of newspapers and magazines, and of private organizations.

To create a favorable impression, letters should be typed in proper business form (see Letter to a Member of the House of Representatives and Letter to a Member of the Senate) on good-quality white or buff paper measuring 8 1/2 by 11 inches. Use either plain stationery or a printed letterhead and a long business envelope with a return address. Fold the sheet in thirds horizontally.

## Letter to a Member of the House of Representatives

100 Any Street
Hometown, Anystate 12345
April 11, 1989

The Honorable John Anyname
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Anyname:

I am writing to urge you to support the "Good Government Bill" (HR 1) now pending before the House of Representatives. It will greatly improve the quality of government.

Sincerely yours,

Mary Citizen

## Letter to a Member of the Senate

100 Any Street
Hometown, Anystate 12345
April 11, 1989

The Honorable Mary Anyname
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Anyname:

I am writing to urge you to support the "Good Government Bill" (S 1) now pending before the Senate. It will greatly improve the quality of government.

Sincerely yours,

John Citizen

Effective letters state their most important point right at the beginning: "We are writing to urge you to support. . ." or "I wish to inquire about. . . ." Effective letter writers marshall their evidence convincingly and state their ideas as succinctly as possible. Busy people who receive a great deal of mail from constituents or readers have little patience for unnecessarily long or detailed letters. Brevity also increases the chance of getting your letter published in the "Letter to the Editor" section of a newspaper. If you are submitting a letter for publication, include a daytime telephone number.

## *Meetings*

Well-run meetings will probably be the mainstay of your group's activities. And the ability to run successful meetings is a plus in many careers. There are two basic types of meetings: *business meetings* that involve business matters such as establishing dues and scheduling, and *program meetings* that are devoted to a previously announced program. Conduct the two types of meetings separately, if possible. Business meetings can be tedious for those not intimately involved in the day-to-day running of the group. Unless you have announced it as a business meeting, try to keep the business elements of any gathering to an absolute minimum.

Assuring that your meetings are interesting, informative, and valuable requires careful planning. An agenda outlining the planned activities and estimating the amount of time to be devoted to each activity is a must. The detailed agenda for a business meeting is often announced in advance, to allow participants to prepare for discussion. For program meetings, it is wise to inform people of the planned time of conclusion. In addition to scheduling, think about equipment and materials necessary for the program, such as visual aids, handouts, or a lectern.

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Programs are most successful when they are planned with the interests and capabilities of the participants in mind. In intergenerational groups, planning requires particular care because of the members' diverse interests, knowledge, and experience. It is especially important that no one can say of the material, "it's over my head" or "it's beneath me."

Making people feel as if they are part of what is going on is essential for a successful meeting or discussion. A skilled leader is sensitive to group dynamics. To be effective, he or she must help the members to

- Get to know who is in the group;
- Appreciate the differences within the group;
- Understand that disagreement and conflict are natural, inevitable, and if handled correctly, often constructive;
- Understand and take responsibility for the rules the group has agreed to; and,
- Appreciate the diversity of talents and abilities within the group.

When leading discussions, it is important to draw in as many participants as possible. When one person asks a question or states an opinion, the leader can take the opportunity to involve others. "Can anyone answer John's question?" Or, "Mary, how do you feel about John's comment?"

A good leader encourages people to turn baiting questions into statements. "Don't you think it's terrible that. . .?" People should be be encouraged to state opinions forthrightly, so that they can be clearly discussed. On controversial subjects, an effective leader draws out various points of view so that all participants feel their views have been heard.

Some of the most exciting and informative activities your group can undertake involve going to new places, either to educate yourselves about an issue or to take some action. The Close Up Foundation runs a highly successful program of intergenerational visits to Washington, D.C., where participants meet with government officials, including members of Congress and foreign ambassadors.

Closer to home, there is also much to learn and accomplish through group visits. Of course organizing such a trip takes careful planning, probably by several of your committees. You must arrange a mutually convenient time for the group visit. You will need to arrange transportation for participants and, if necessary, meals and lodging. In an intergenerational group, it is especially important to make sure that the place to be visited presents no undue hazards, will not tax the physical strength of any visitor, and is easily accessible to all participants.

## Site Visits

An excellent way to explore an issue is to visit sites associated with it. For example, visiting a waste-treatment plant can throw considerable light on issues of waste disposal and the environment. Your community probably has numerous interesting and useful places to visit.

In arranging a visit, make sure that the site is open to visitors and able to accommodate your group at the time you wish to arrive. Check on opening and closing times, whether you can observe people in session or at work, and any restrictions.

Your group's arrival should be expected. This means that you must write or call the appropriate official and get his or

her authorization for the visit. Many organizations and institutions have public relations or public affairs offices that can tell you the proper person to contact.

The particular requirements of dress, equipment, and so forth will depend on the nature of the specific site. For instance, some visits might require good walking shoes or waterproof boots. For other visits, business attire might be more appropriate. Check with your contact person about these details.

To get the most out of any visit, participants should be briefed about what to expect when they arrive. Also, they will probably want to prepare some questions. A planned visit to an important site can serve as the focus for several informational meetings beforehand. You will also find it useful to meet after the visit to discuss and digest what you saw and learned.

### *Attending Hearings, Legislative Sessions, and Public Meetings*

The proceedings of governmental bodies and commissions, such as city councils and state legislatures, are often open to the public and may provide information about your issue that is difficult to obtain elsewhere.

As with other group visits, it is important to get detailed information about the time and place. Admission to hearings is often limited by the amount of available seating. You will need to know how many members can be admitted and how long before the announced time your group should arrive. At hearings in particular, it is important to know in advance who the members of the panel are; what offices they hold, if any; and what interests they represent.

Many legislative bodies admit the public to viewing galleries. In some cases, tickets are necessary for admission, so be sure you can secure a sufficient number. Usually members of the legislative body can provide tickets. For impor-

tant or highly publicized debates, tickets are often in great demand; therefore, it is important to contact a member's office well beforehand.

## *Lobbying*

Lobbying, the practice of trying to influence a government official's decision through personal persuasion, takes its name from the old custom of accosting members of Congress in the lobbies of the Capitol. Today, however, lobbying generally takes place in officials' offices. Especially in the legislative branch of government, such as the U.S. Congress or the state legislatures, members' offices accept, and welcome, visits by constituents who wish to make known their views. These personal talks are often very effective. Nonpartisan groups such as those affiliated with the Close Up Foundation cannot, of course, attempt to influence legislation. However, individual members of such groups can exercise their rights as citizens and attempt to persuade officials.

It may not always be possible to meet with the member in person, although you improve your chances by asking in advance for an appointment. Keep in mind, though, that legislative schedules are sometimes unpredictable, with votes, quorum calls, or committee meetings occurring throughout the day.

If the elected official cannot personally meet with you, someone from his or her staff will almost always offer to substitute. It is best to ask to speak with the staff member currently involved with the issue in which you are interested. In fact, you might want to ask for an appointment with this particular staff member in the first place. Staffers are usually quite knowledgeable about issues in which they specialize—in fact, often more knowledgeable than the legislative member.

Elected representatives are always interested in knowing the views of their constituents. Even if you arrive unannounced, you can be sure that someone will record and tally your views.

Whether meeting with the member or staffer, an effective lobbyist is very well informed about the issue in general and about the points he or she wishes to make. It is wise, therefore, to prepare yourself for such a meeting. Write a summary of your main points with the facts supporting them to leave with the person you talk to. An effective lobbyist keeps in mind that officials and staff members often have crowded and hectic schedules, and, therefore, it is wise to say what you want to say succinctly.

## *Testifying*

Governmental bodies investigating issues often invite knowledgeable citizens to testify at hearings. Members of your group may become so well informed on an issue that they wish to testify.

Appearing before a hearing almost always requires a specific appointment. You will need to apply to the proper person at the proper time. Finding out how, when, and to whom you should apply implies that you are following an issue quite closely. If you are given a specific time to appear, it is absolutely essential that you are present and punctual, because you probably will not be given the opportunity to make up a missed turn.

Testifying requires careful preparation. Witnesses at hearings are often allowed to read a prepared statement before answering questions. In many cases, staff members speak with witnesses in advance to prepare their legislative members who will be participating in the hearing.

Once your group becomes interested in an issue, its members may decide to expand into first-hand involvement through community service. For example, study of the issue of homelessness may lead your group to volunteer at a shelter or food kitchen. Concern about the environment may culminate in work at a recycling center. Interest in education may suggest volunteering for a school tutoring program. The wide range of talents and experiences found in an intergenerational group lends itself to many forms of community service.

If you are collaborating with a service facility in your community, investigate its activities and reputation to be sure it is reputable and effective. Perhaps someone can be appointed to investigate and report back to the whole group.

Before your group commits to a community service project, be sure you know how much time your members are willing to spend and what sort of tasks they are willing to do. There is no use offering to staff a hotline or deliver food to the homeless if you can't provide the necessary workers!

It is important to develop procedures to let your members know exactly *when* and *where* they are expected and what they will have to do. Be sure that transportation is available, that facilities are accessible, and that personal security can be assured.

Community service projects often require a great deal of planning and organization, but they are among the most enriching activities that you can do. Participants, especially young people, are likely to see walks of life that they did not know existed. They will forge lasting bonds with their fellow volunteers. And they will know the deep satisfaction of helping people in need.

Planning a public event is probably the most complex project your group can undertake. But it can also be the most fun. A public event might be small (a debate between two people in a school classroom or church hall) or large (an auction and dinner). It can be serious (a symposium on a particular issue) or just for pleasure (an intergenerational dance teach-in). It can be oriented toward civic awareness (a nonpartisan panel discussion) or civic action (a rally or parade). Whatever your event may be, it will not be successful unless it is well organized.

The bigger the event, the more people you can involve. A big event calls for a wide range of skills and personality types. Persons with good "people" skills can contact speakers and see to their needs; those who enjoy detail work can plan logistics.

Everyone connected with a public event, especially chairpersons, will have a chance to hone their organizational skills. Delegating responsibility, establishing priorities, making decisions, compiling lists, following timelines, keeping budgets, and successfully interacting with others are skills that are used daily in administrative jobs. Acquiring or sharpening such skills can be beneficial to anyone in your group.

You may even want to involve people who are not a part of your group. Public events, especially large ones, require a lot of effort and volunteer help. Even if you have chosen not to affiliate with another group on a permanent basis, members may decide to work with others just for one event. You may also recruit nonmembers who are interested in a particular event. These additional helpers may decide to join your group after the event is over.

## *Brainstorming and Basic Decisions*

Before you do any real planning, your group must meet and talk out some basics. What kind of an event does the group want to hold? For what purpose? How big should it be? How will it be funded? Many questions need to be answered.

If your organization is informal, without elected officers, one person should be chosen to act as treasurer for the event, and a special bank account should be opened. If you already have a treasurer and/or a bank account, you may not need a special account.

The group might also decide to give itself a special name for this particular event. For example, if your group has decided to operate as "The Smithville Close Up Club," but then decides to become involved in a civic action activity, it might rename itself "Smithville Citizens Against Toxic Waste" or "Smithville United for Teacher Pay Raises." The members may even decide to develop a special logo for the event, to be used on stationery or signs.

The entire group should also agree on a timeline (see Timeline for a Panel Discussion). Allow as much planning time as possible to do good organizational work without undue stress.

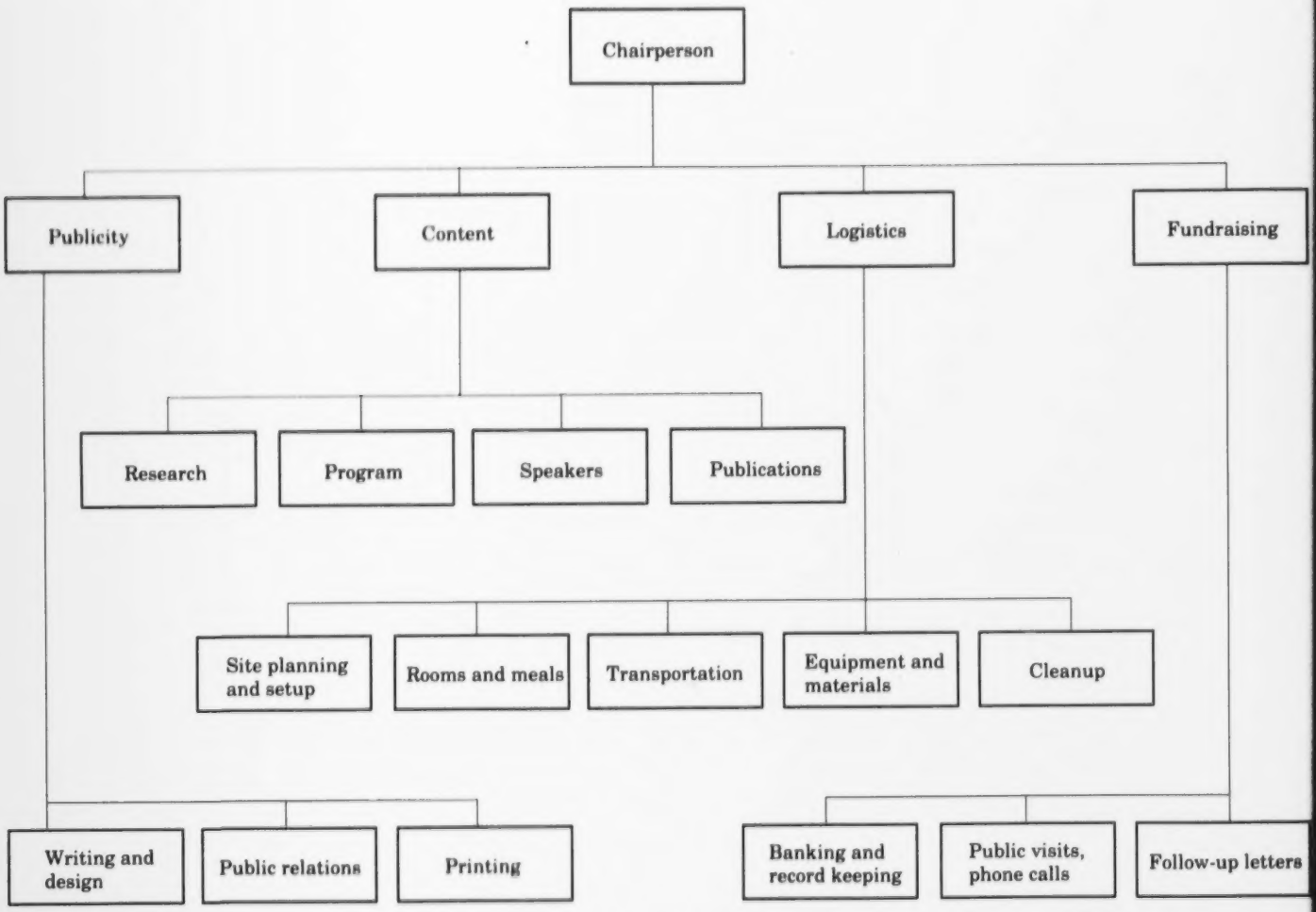
Publicity must go out early or nobody will come to your event. More important, everyone should understand the time frame and be prepared to operate within it. Conflicts may arise between the people who like to get their jobs done early and those who like to wait until the last minute, but as long as the work gets done, all styles should be respected. Frank discussion of any differences may help. Problems will be minimized as group members build mutual trust and respect.

Urge everyone to remain as flexible as possible because planning is a dynamic process, and plans may change as an event begins to take shape.

## Timeline for a Panel Discussion

| | |
|---|---|
| Feb. 1 | Brainstorm and make first decisions–set date and topic |
| Feb. 2 | Start research |
| Feb. 15 | Start site planning and fundraising |
| March 1 | Confirm site |
| March 5 | Complete research |
| March 10 | Start contacting speakers |
| April 10 | Confirm all speakers |
| April 11 | Send out first press release and radio spots |
| April 15 | Discuss site needs with site contact person |
| April 20 | Contact press about possible coverage before or during event |
| April 22 | Print flyers, banners, or special publicity |
| April 25 | Send out invitations if needed |
| May 1 | Distribute flyers, arrange special publicity |
| May 5 | Reconfirm all speakers, contact press again |
| May 7 | Print programs or other materials |
| May 9 | Collect all necessary site materials (handouts, special equipment) |
| May 19 | Set up site–make sure all equipment and materials are in place or ordered<br>Meet out-of-town speakers, make them comfortable |
| May 20 | Event |
| May 22 | Send out thank you letters, final press release |
| May 27 | Write evaluation or report |

**Work Diagram**



## *Developing Committees*

Just as you developed committees to carry out the general work of the group (see "Dividing the Work" at the beginning of this chapter), you should now develop specific committees for this special event.

If you have someone who is willing to serve as overall chairperson of your event, you are in luck. On the other hand, if no one wants to take total responsibility for the event, choose two or three co-chairpersons, each of whom is responsible for part of the event. Considering the nature of an intergenerational group and the importance of assigning equal responsibility to people of every age, it might even be a good idea to have two chairpersons—one younger and one older. The rest of your group can then decide where they would like to work, and committees can be formed.

Just about every public event involves planning, publicity, and fundraising. Publicity and fundraising are handled in Chapters 5 and 6, so the following section is concerned only with planning.

The planning of any public event can be divided into two broad areas, *content* and *logistics*. Your group may want to make up a work diagram (see Work Diagram) to simplify the planning process. This example outlines the chain of responsibility for one event. It is only one of many similar models that can be used to clearly define who is responsible to whom and for what.

### Content

The content committee takes the whole group's idea and develops it further, researching topics for a debate or symposium, planning the theme for a dance or dinner, deciding on speakers or entertainers and program, developing handouts for the audience, and writing a summary or

recommendations after the event is over. The person who volunteers for the content committee will probably be a "people person" who enjoys asking questions and relating to others. The content committee may be subdivided into four subcommittees with various responsibilities.

*Research.* By doing some diligent homework, the research subcommittee will not only learn about the topic at hand, but also about people who are experts on that topic. The researchers will then know who to invite as speakers, if speakers are wanted, and what sides of an issue the speakers represent. As stated earlier, everyone—from high school students on up—can help with research.

The research subcommittee can also discover more about the group's intentions for the event. What kind of entertainers would they like to see at a fundraiser? How might an auction be set up? What would be the best way to structure an intergenerational run? Should local businesses be involved?

Different age-groups might have different ideas on topics such as these. The research group should resolve problems and devise compromises if necessary. For example, two bands could be hired for an event, a swing band and a rock band, each playing half the time.

*Program.* A program subcommittee could also be established to make other program decisions. Who will speak first? Who will be the moderator or serve as master of ceremonies? Will there be entertainment before a symposium? Will there be a reception and refreshments afterward? What other speeches or presentations should be on the program? Perhaps the duties of the research and program committees could be combined.

*Speakers.* After the basic decisions have been made, the research subcommittee or a separate speaker subcommittee can arrange speakers, entertainers, or other guests. It is a good idea to line up at least four speakers for a large event

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such as a symposium or rally. (In case one cancels at the last minute, you can still go on with three.) You can hold a debate with as few as two speakers, but it is always a good idea to have substitutes lined up in case of cancellations. If the object of your event is to increase civic awareness, be sure to invite speakers who have a variety of views.

Give guests as much advance notice as possible—people are busy. Opinion is divided as to whether it is best to call guests first or start with a letter of invitation followed by a phone call. Either is acceptable, depending on how comfortable committee members feel with phone calls. In either case, as soon as someone accepts the invitation, send a confirming letter including the date, time, and place of the event.

Choose participants in your program judiciously. Find out if projected guests are good speakers. Some people are extremely knowledgeable but put an audience to sleep. Steer clear of these types! If you are sponsoring a debate or panel discussion, be sure to line up a skilled moderator. A good moderator knows how to energize a lagging discussion, how to reduce conflict between speakers or between a speaker and the audience, how and when to rephrase questions, and how to draw information out of reluctant panelists. If you are hiring entertainers, you may want to see them or hear a tape of their work first.

Content committee members may want to discuss topics with each speaker ahead of time. Knowing each participant's views is helpful in structuring a discussion. They may also want to make sure that the speakers get across certain points. Speakers will also want to know how much time they have and how much time will be allotted for questions. Although many debates, panel discussions, and symposia look like they "just happen," the best are carefully structured and then carried along by a skilled moderator.

All guests, whether they are speakers, entertainers, or facilitators, will want to know what is expected of them.

Check back with them about two weeks before the event to be sure they are coming and understand exactly what will happen there.

If some of your guests are coming from out of town, committee members might want to ask them about hotel preferences, transportation, food preferences, and arrival time. This information can then be passed along to the logistics subcommittee.

After the event, the speakers subcommittee should write thank you letters to all guests.

*Publications.* The audience at your event may want to have some background information on the discussion topic, on the event, and on your organization. The content committee can appoint several persons to summarize this information in a program or special handout. The program should also include a list of speakers or entertainers and their backgrounds, lists of committee members, lists of contributors to the event, and any other pertinent information.

**Logistics**

Members who volunteer to be on the logistics committee will probably be detail-oriented and feel a great sense of responsibility. Each committee is equally important. While the content people plan an event, the logistics people really make it happen. The responsibilities of the logistics committee include the following:

- *Arrange for the place to hold the event.* The site may be large (a city auditorium or hotel) or small (a church hall). Consider all special needs before signing a contract with the organization or business that owns the facility. Will you need access for the handicapped? A kitchen for food preparation? A stage or rostrum? Special acoustics? Special security for people or materials?

- *Make sure that the facility is reasonable for the size of the event.* You are better off with too little space than too much. People feel that they are at a successful event if the room is overflowing; they do not feel comfortable milling around in a large, half-empty room.

- *Arrange for the facility to be ready for the event.* This might include hiring janitors to see that the hall is properly lighted and heated; making a seating diagram indicating either auditorium style, round tables, or a U-shape; arranging for security; installing special equipment or television hookups; building a stage or backdrop.

- *See to it that all necessary materials are on hand for the event.* This might include ordering food; supplying microphones or audiovisual equipment; supplying banners, signs, or other decorations; having on hand the proper number of chairs and tables.

- *Make arrangements for guests.* If speakers are coming from out of town, the committee may need to make hotel reservations, meet planes, or arrange transportation to the event. The committee should be prepared to meet all guests' special needs or requests.

- *Hire or assign people to set up and clean the event site.*

The logistics committee will have to work closely with representatives of the event site. They may be government officials, church or synagogue leaders, or local business people. The committee may also have to work with caterers, sound or lighting engineers, security guards, and maintenance people.

## Checklist for a Rally

| Task | Date | Comments |
|---|---|---|
| Arrange permission to use park site | | |
| Confirm permit | | |
| Start fundraising | | |
| Contact speakers and bands | | |
| Confirm speakers and bands | | |
| Distribute first press release | | |
| Print balloons, posters, hats, banners, pins, flyers | | |
| Arrange for police security and barricades | | |
| Arrange refreshments, portable toilets, stage, sound system | | |
| Confirm site plan—entrance, exit, parking, first aid, command post | | |
| Follow up with press | | |
| Meet speakers, collect materials at command post | | |
| Help radio and TV people set up, arrange interviews | | |
| Rally | | |
| Cleanup | | |
| Send thank yous | | |
| Evaluate program and planning process | | |

## *Checking on Progress*

The chairperson of an event should keep a checklist (see Checklist for a Rally) as the planning process goes along. The checklist can be measured against the original timeline to see how well the event is progressing.

## *Evaluating the Event*

After an event is over, it is a good idea to look back at it and see what worked and what did not. Evaluation can be a big help when you are planning your next event. Your group may decide to get together and evaluate the event verbally, or you may prefer to prepare a written summary or report. If you decide on a written report, make sure that someone is responsible for writing it (probably the chairpersons), with contributions from all participants. If writing is left up to a group, it will never get done.

# 5 / PUBLICITY

The importance of publicity, especially *good* publicity, cannot be overestimated. Most people underestimate the importance of publicity, even though they recognize that we are living in a media-centered society. How will the public know that your group exists if you do not tell them? How will you find new members if your group is unknown? How will you find funds? *If you hold a public event and do not publicize it properly, nobody will come.* Although they do not like to admit it, most people are heavily influenced by publicity. Good publicity is at the heart of political campaigns and business marketing.

As your members organize and get to know one another, you might want to form a special publicity committee that is responsible for "getting the word out" about anything your group does.

Your publicity people should be the creative types—of any age. These are the "idea" people. They are often an outgoing group who like to share their ideas with others. Try to include a few good writers, a good artist if you have one,

and some aggressive "PR" (public relations) types who can promote your group or events within the community.

Here again, anyone who serves on this committee will gain valuable on-the-job experience and marketable skills.

## How to Use the Media

### Brainstorming

Once the publicity committee has been formed, it should schedule a brainstorming session. At a session like this all ideas should be discussed, even the craziest ones. Think about ways in which your group can obtain publicity, from the common to the bizarre. Newspapers, letters, radio, and television are obvious ways. But how about skywriting? Flagpole sitting? Printed balloons? Jot down all suggestions, even the crazy ones, and save them for planning a future event.

It is even more important than usual for each age-group in your brainstorming session to listen and give credence to everyone's ideas. With the understanding that every committee member will respect the others' opinions and make only positive statements, this kind of session can be a lot of fun.

If your organization has given itself a special name for a particular event (see "Brainstorming and Basic Decisions" in Chapter 4), should it have a logo? What kind of logo? Once this question has been decided, ask a member to design the logo. Logos look nice on stationery, posters, and flyers. They distinguish your group from others with a similar purpose.

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## *Research*

Next, turn to some serious research. Find out the names and addresses of all the newspapers (including local "shoppers") and magazines and radio and television (including cable) stations in the area. Who are the contact people at each place? What are their deadlines? Who schedules guests for local talk shows? In what form should publicity be submitted? Be aware that some of the print media—particularly magazines and biweekly or bimonthly papers—have long "lead times"; that is, they go to the printer way ahead of the date on which they are published, and, therefore, often need to receive material weeks ahead of their publishing date.

After a media list is developed, it can be used over and over again, although it will need to be updated at least once a year. There is a great deal of turnover in media jobs and ownership. In small towns and cities, compiling a media list is easy because media sources are few. In large cities, someone has probably compiled the list already. The public relations department of any local newspaper, radio station, or large community organization can probably tell you how to obtain the list. Your local Chamber of Commerce might also be a good source of information.

Also, become familiar with your local cable television stations. Many city or county government departments use a cable channel to broadcast government meetings and hearings plus resource information in which your group might be interested. Perhaps you might even have the opportunity to prepare a program for cable television.

In addition, if your group decides to participate in a Close Up teleconference, you will have important expertise for Close Up coordinators as to teleconference sites and setup.

## *Getting Your Feet Wet*

The publicity committee's efforts will probably grow as the group's activities grow. At first, try for some mention in the newspaper. Send out a news release to the local paper announcing the formation of your organization. Type your release on stationery imprinted with your logo. In this way you can begin image building by familiarizing the community with your group and what your group stands for.

## *In the Swim*

As your activities proceed, keep the information flowing. If your members have mounted a letter-writing campaign on an issue, announce it with a press release—"Thanks to the outstanding efforts of Smithville Citizens for Lower Taxes, an intergenerational group, two hundred letters have been sent to legislators at the state capital protesting the projected increase in the state sales tax."

If your group has made a site visit or plans to testify at local or state hearings, send out a news release about it. Keep the intergenerational factor in the forefront of your publicity, since that is what makes your group unique. A photograph of your members during a site visit, with both youngsters and seniors pictured, will tell your story better than the press release that accompanies it.

If your group is performing an interesting community service or has done something particularly exciting, try to have some of the members interviewed on a local radio or television talk show. Make sure all age-groups are represented to emphasize the intergenerational factor.

Seek to develop relationships with the people to whom you are sending publicity material. If they know members of your organization personally, they may be more inclined to use your information. But *do not pester them.* Reporters and editors are busy, constantly working under deadline

pressures. Become familiar with the format of their publications or programs, respect their deadlines, and don't bother them with unnecessary phone calls.

Keep sending out information. More of your material will be used if you live in a small town or city because there is less competition and more room for local news. However, even in a big city, persistence eventually pays off.

### *The Big Splash*

Save the major publicity push for big public events. Use a combination of publicity—radio, television, newspapers, posters, balloons—anything that will call attention to your event. Look back at the notes from your brainstorming session. They may lead to some useful new ideas.

As with the overall planning of a public event (see Chapter 4), the important keys to effective promotion are organization and timeliness. Start your publicity efforts as early as possible and start with a plan. Will you use radio? Television? Posters? Try to provide publicity *before* the event, *during* the event (try to have a local reporter on the scene), and *after* the event. Prepare a timeline (see Chapter 4), taking print and broadcast deadlines into consideration, and stick to it. Remember, a public event is supposed to be just that, *public*. Without publicity, it becomes a private event!

## Print Media

The proper form in which to submit publicity information to newspapers or magazines is the *press release* or *news release*. News releases follow a specific form. (See News Release.) Your organization's name and address should appear at the top, followed by some indication of a date when the information can be used. ("For immediate use" is often good enough.) The name and phone number of a contact person from your organization (probably the publicity chairperson) should also be included.

Make the editor's work as easy as possible. Leave at least two inches of space on top of the page before starting the release so the editor has space to write. If the release is more than one page, write "more" at the bottom of each page and put a short identifying word at the top of all pages following the first (e.g., "Close Up, page 2"). Do not break a paragraph or a sentence. (Each page might be given to a different typesetter.) Write "end" or "30" or "##" at the end of the release.

An interesting or intriguing photograph can be submitted with the release. Most publications require black and white glossy prints. The standard size is 8 by 10 inches. Write a caption or explanation of the photograph on a separate page and tape it to the back of the photo. Include the name of your contact person in case the photo gets separated from the release.

News releases can be submitted before an event to attract people, after an event to tell people that it occurred, or both.

The following rules should help you write better news releases:

**News Release**
**(Can be used for print media, radio, or television)**

Smithville Citizens for a Cleaner River
103 Main Street
Smithville, Indiana 00110

FOR RELEASE: July 12, 1989

CONTACT: Juliette Jones (555-4567) or Ted Smith (555-6789)

Young and old are joining hands in a concerted new effort to clean up the Smithville River. Smithville Citizens for a Cleaner River, an intergenerational group that was formed to promote citizen interest in river cleanup, will hold a town meeting to discuss the topic at 8 p.m. on Monday, July 18. The meeting will be held in the auditorium of Smithville High School and is open to the entire community.

Jerry Bates, a senior at Smithville High School, and Wilma Dugan, a retired environmental scientist, will co-chair the meeting and answer questions about cleanup strategies. Lively discussion is expected.

The twenty-five members of Smithville Citizens for a Cleaner River, whose ages range from fifteen to eighty-two, are also planning a lobbying trip to the state capital in October when the state legislature reconvenes. During the summer, the members will be gathering signatures on petitions and conducting a campaign to educate area citizens about the importance of cleaning up the river.

--END--

1. The most important information should appear in the first paragraph, with succeeding paragraphs containing information in descending order of importance. Some publications have limited space and will use only the first part of your release, so be sure to include all of the "five W's" (who, what, where, when, why) as close to the top as possible.

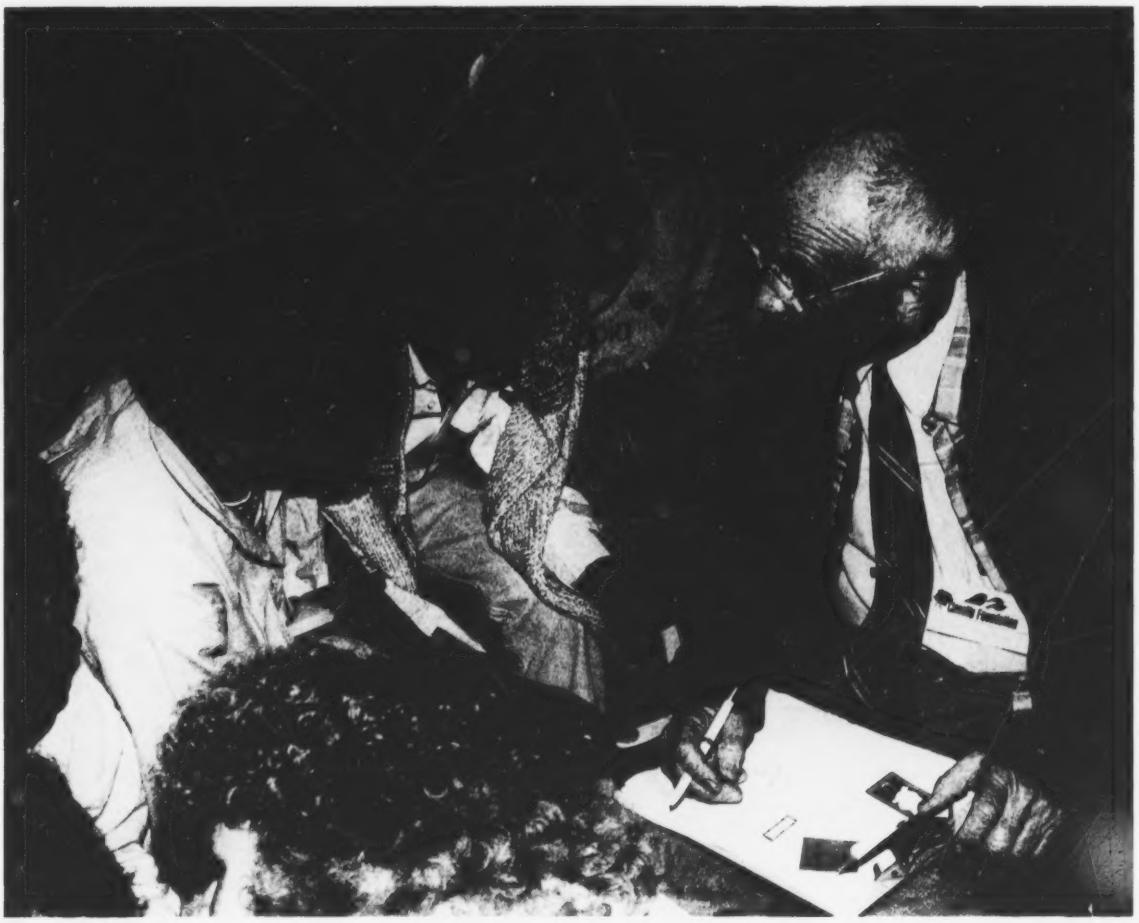
2. Try to come up with an interesting lead or beginning. Editors receive hundreds of press releases a month, therefore they will be more likely to read and print yours if it stands out from the others.

3. Keep it short and readable. Even the most complex event can be described in a page or two. And be sure to *type* your release (or use a word processor), *double spaced,* and *without errors.*

Another way of publicizing your event in the print media is through a *paid advertisement.* In this case the publicity committee will have to decide how large an ad it can afford or who might donate money for an ad. You will also have to decide on "layout"—how the ad will look. Will you use a photograph or logo? What kind of typeface would look good? The business or advertising staff of the publication can help with these decisions.

### *Broadcast Media*

There is no law stating that radio or television stations have to devote a fixed amount of time to nonprofit community groups, but most want to have a reputation of service to the public. Understandably, competition for free public service time is very heavy, so make sure that your message is important, of wide interest, and presented in the best possible form. Press releases for radio differ from releases for television.



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**Radio**

Radio "spots" called *public service announcements* or *PSA's* follow much the same format as news releases (see Radio Spot), but they must be shorter—most often thirty seconds (75 words) or sixty seconds (150 words). Along with the name and address of your group and name and phone number of the contact person, specify the starting and ending dates for your PSA.

Copy for voice should be more informal than copy for print, although in many cases organizations submit their print news releases for use on radio as well. This is certainly acceptable, but your message will not come over as well. For difficult words or names, include a phonetic spelling.

Submit several copies of your PSA, especially if it will be reread over a long period.

Here are a few rules for better public service announcements.

1. Grab the attention of the listener or viewer fast, with an interesting opening.

2. State the five W's as quickly as possible and repeat important information—it is difficult for the listener to catch a lot of detail the first time.

3. Read your PSA out loud to see if it sounds exciting and fits the required time frame. Time it!

If you want to arrange for some of your members to be interviewed on a local radio program, make sure you *know the program.* Each show has a distinct character. Your topic must fit the show's context. Don't waste a producer's time by making inappropriate suggestions. Make sure the interviewees are articulate and knowledgeable. Try to include all age-groups. Parts of these interviews might also be taped for use as spots.

## Radio Spot

Smithville Close Up Club
P.O. Box 987
Smithville, Vermont 99099

START: September 1, 1989

DISCONTINUE: January 1, 1990

CONTACT: Wilton James (555-6543)

30 seconds

Now here is a new word for you to know—"intergenerating." (in-ter-gen-er-at-ing).

It means people of all generations working together for the good of the community. The Smithville Close Up Club needs members from all generations who want to take an active role in the democratic process.

For more information, call Sally Burke at 555-6789.

Start intergenerating today for a better tomorrow.

## Television Spot

Smithville Citizens for a Cleaner River
103 Main Street
Smithville, Indiana 00110

START: July 10, 1989

DISCONTINUE: December 1, 1989

CONTACT: Juliette Jones (555-4567) or Ted Smith (555-6789)

30 seconds

| VIDEO | AUDIO |
| --- | --- |
| SLIDE OF TRASH BY THE SIDE OF THE RIVER, OR TIRES AND DEAD FISH FLOATING. (slide #1) | Our beutiful Smithville River is dying. We'd better do something about it, and do it fast. |
| SLIDE OF YOUNG PERSON AND OLDER PERSON BY THE RIVER POINTING OUT SITES. (slide #2) | That's why young and old are joining hands in an intergenerational effort to make river cleanup a reality. |
| SLIDE OF THE WHOLE GROUP, OR GROUP'S LOGO, WITH NAME "SMITHVILLE CITIZENS FOR A CLEANER RIVER" AND PHONE NUMBER SUPERIMPOSED. (slide #3) | They need your help. Call 555-4567 today and join Smithville Citizens for a Cleaner River. The river's future is up to you. |

**Television**

Television spots follow a similar format as radio spots, except for the visual component. Your copy will be divided into AUDIO and VIDEO sections (see Television Spot) and you will need to supply stations with photographs, slides, or videotapes for the video component. Talk to the program or public service director at a local station about the production of audiovisual materials. He or she will tell you where and how you can have visuals produced.

Because of accompanying visuals, television spots require fewer words—about 40 words for a twenty-second spot, 60 words for a thirty-second spot, and 150 words for a sixty-second spot.

Make sure your copy conforms to the visuals. Number and identify all slides and indicate their order. Provide one slide or picture for each ten seconds of air time.

Keep the visuals interesting—they are the attention grabbers here, not the words. Make sure your visuals get the intergenerational message across.

The same rules for interviews apply here as for radio. Your interviewees will become local celebrities, so make sure they look good and are knowledgeable and articulate. As with radio, fragments of interviews might make good material for future television spots.

## *Other Types of Publicity*

Along with print and broadcast media publicity, there are many other ways to promote your event.

- *Flyers and Handouts.* You might want to print colorful announcements or flyers on 8 1/2-by-11-inch paper and distribute them around town, hang them in store windows, or tack them onto utility poles. Small cards, matchbooks, or other items that announce your event might be handed out in the community.

- *Posters.* Large printed posters might be specially designed or illustrated by a high school art class and displayed in prominent spots.

- *Banners.* A large banner might be made to hang across one of the major streets of your town.

- *Special Mailings.* Your event might appeal to specific groups of citizens. If you can secure mailing lists, a special letter or announcement can be sent to those people.

The sky is the limit for publicity efforts. When planning publicity, let imaginations soar!

# 6 / FUNDRAISING

Like publicity, fundraising is worthy of a separate chapter. Although raising money is integral to everything your group does, it involves separate strictures and requires separate skills.

Most organizations soon discover that they will need money if they hope to carry out their objectives. They must then consider how and from whom funds will be obtained. The group as a whole can take responsibility for fundraising, or a special committee can be designated, similar to the publicity committee.

As with your planning and publicity committees, individuals with certain skills are needed to organize fundraising. They are usually salesperson types—aggressive, self-confident, and outgoing. They are not embarrassed about asking for money and are not upset if turned down.

Many people do not enjoy raising money, but look upon it as a necessary evil. As with other tasks mentioned in this book, fundraising will provide excellent experience for young people who are planning to go into sales, marketing,

or development work. Many older persons are familiar with raising money from their life work or experience with other volunteer organizations; others may want to try something new.

## *Brainstorming*

As with planning and publicity, some group brainstorming should precede fund-raising efforts. Do members want to charge dues? Do they want to affiliate with another, perhaps larger, group for funding purposes? Do they want to sponsor fundraisers? What kinds? Can funds be raised from local businesses, local government agencies, individuals, and other groups? How can the group raise funds and still maintain its nonprofit status?

## *Research*

Once the members have discussed their ideas for fundraising, they may have to do some research. Find out what businesses or civic organizations in your area have given to citizenship education groups in the past. Decide what businesses or organizations would have an interest in your issue. For example, zoning issues would likely be of concern to builders and real estate agents; antipollution issues may attract local factory owners and automobile dealers. Some members of your group may have personal connections with local businesses or civic clubs that might help.

Once you have established a list of possible funding sources, save it until you have a specific funding proposal to make. Potential donors are much more likely to respond to a specific, limited request such as "We need $500 to rent a bus for a lobbying trip to the state capital," than they are

to a vague, unfocused request such as "Can you please contribute some money to our club?" Many businesses or organizations even supply guidelines for proposals or special forms that you must complete in order to request funds. Remember, someone in the group must be responsible for the paperwork.

## Ongoing Funding

While the group as a whole or the fund-raising committee compiles a list of possible contributors, especially for special events, the group can proceed with its activities.

Perhaps all members can be charged nominal dues, just enough to cover expenses. Dues might pay for refreshments after a meeting, stationery, or postage. Many young people and retired people do not have much money, so this cannot be the only source of funding.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, one of the advantages of affiliation is funding. Your group may be asked to pay a fee to become a chapter of a regional or national group, but the resources of the larger group will then be at your disposal.

## Affiliating with Close Up

The Close Up Foundation provides limited funding assistance for local programs and publications. Special funds are available for intergenerational programs, and grants are available for symposia in selected communities.

While encouraging diversity and expansion of local interests, the Close Up Foundation maintains certain requirements for using the Close Up name and logo and for receiving financial assistance. Your Close Up community coordinator will be happy to review the requirements with you

and answer any questions you have about affiliating with Close Up.

Note: The Close Up Foundation requests funding from many national corporations. If you are planning to contact the local branch or office of a national corporation, be sure to contact the Close Up development office first, to avoid a conflict in funding requests.

### *Affiliating with Other Groups*

Affiliating with other regional or national organizations may also entail special requirements. Your group must decide whether or not the benefits of affiliating outweigh the disadvantages.

### *Fundraisers*

Your group may decide to sponsor one or more fund-raising events to support itself. The events can be as simple as holding a bake sale, or as complex as operating a food concession at the county fair. They may or may not involve obtaining donations from local business people.

Consider some intergenerational events that might be fun, such as a fun run/walk. Remember, there are thousands of recreational runners in this country—many of them seniors. Race entrants could be required to sign up as a team of one younger and one older. While each person would run separately, winners would be decided on the basis of combined times. Contact a local running club for help and advice.

Or try an intergenerational dance contest, in which contestants of all ages dance to their favorite music but also try to learn dances of another generation. Prizes could be given to senior citizens who conquer reggae or rock, and to teenagers who perfect the rumba, waltz, or fox-trot.

In either case, contestants would pay to participate. Prizes could be donated by local merchants and refreshments supplied by club members.

## *Special Funding*

At some point you will need or want special funding for your group's work. Having done your research, you will have a list of local potential donors to approach, and you may even have individuals on hand who can personally approach them. You may request a donation for a specific need (a bus, a special mailing, an advertisement, a scholarship) or you may want the company or organization to finance your entire event.

Whatever your need, here are some simple steps to follow.

- *Start your efforts as early as possible before an event.* Working your way through the funding process often takes a long time.

- *Make exploratory phone calls.* If previous research hasn't turned up this information already, find out who the contact person is at the business from which you are requesting a donation. Find out his or her proper title and name spelling.

- *Write a letter of request on your group's stationery.* Be as concise and specific as possible about your request. Also, tell the potential donors "what's in it for them." Point out that a contribution will enhance their reputation in the community, that their support of intergenerational programs is unique and important. State that you will follow up the letter with a phone call.

- *Complete your proposal promptly.* If the firm replies with a special form that you must complete to make your proposal, fill it out clearly and return it quickly.

- *Follow up your request.* If you have not heard from the company after two weeks, call your contact person and refer to the letter or proposal form. If your request is turned down, do not complain. Offer a polite thank you. If your request is accepted, thank your contact person enthusiastically.

- *Express your thanks.* If you receive the funds, items, or services you requested, write a thank you letter promptly.

- *Recognition is important.* If a local business or organization is supporting a public event, make sure that they are mentioned prominently in the program. A representative of the donor may want to participate in the event with a speech or presentation. If at all possible, make sure that he or she can do so. If representatives of donors attend your event, make sure they are recognized.

- *Show appreciation.* After the event is over, send the donors a thank you note with extra copies of the program, newspaper articles, or any other reports in which they might be mentioned.

## Record Keeping

Where funds are concerned, accurate record keeping is very important. Individuals or companies may ask for records of their donations for tax purposes. Your treasurer should also be concerned about maintaining your group's tax-exempt status.

If you have any questions about the paperwork concerned with fundraising, be sure to seek professional advice from a lawyer or accountant.

# A FINAL WORD

This book has presented the basic ideas and information you need to get into the swing of intergenerational programming. Across America, people like you, people of all ages, are exploring this exciting new kind of group action.

Whatever your group's goals, you will find, as others have, that intergenerating adds an enriching and satisfying dimension to your life.

Don't forget that this is a new field and that your experience will add to what is already known about intergenerational programming. Please let us hear from you.

Good luck!

The following organizations sponsor or encourage intergenerational programs of various kinds. They might be able to supply you with publications, materials, or information about intergenerating.

**American Association of Retired Persons (AARP)**
1909 K Street, NW
Washington, DC 20049
(202) 872-4700

**Center for Intergenerational Learning**
**Institute on Aging**
Temple University
1601 North Broad Street
Philadelphia, PA 19122
(215) 787-6708

**Children's Defense Fund**
122 C Street, NW, Suite 400
Washington, DC 20001
(202) 628-8787

**Gray Panthers**
311 South Juniper Street, Suite 601
Philadelphia, PA 19107
(215) 545-6555

**National Association of State Units on Aging**
2033 K Street, NW, Suite 304
Washington, DC 20006
(202) 785-0707

**National Clearinghouse on Intergenerational Programs and Issues**
Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), Dane County
517 North Segoe Road, Suite 210
Madison, WI 53705
(608) 238-7787

**The National Council on the Aging, Inc. (NCOA)**
600 Maryland Avenue, SW
West Wing 100
Washington, DC 20024
(202) 479-1200

**Older Women's League (OWL)**
730 11th Street, NW, Suite 300
Washington, DC 20001
(202) 783-6686

Close Up Foundation
[illegible] Jefferson Davis Highway
Arlington, Virginia 22202